

North Carolina Minority Health Facts



African Americans

State Center for Health Statistics and Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

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Introduction

This report presents basic health facts about African Americans in North Carolina in the areas of mortality, chronic diseases, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, health risk factors, access to health care, quality of life, maternal and infant health, and child and adolescent health. But first we present some background information on the African American population in the state.

African Americans comprise more than 21 percent of North Carolina's total population. The 2000 Census counted 1,738,000 residents of North Carolina who reported their race as African American alone, and also nearly 19,000 who reported African American in combination with another race. The African American population of North Carolina has increased by approximately 18 percent since 1990.

African Americans in North Carolina are younger than the majority white population. According to the 2000 Census, the median age of the state's African American population was 31 years, compared to 38 years for the white population of the state. The average life expectancy at birth is 70 years for African Americans in North Carolina, compared to 76 years for whites.

The maps on page 2 show the number of African Americans living in each county and also the

percentage of each county's total population that is African American. It can be seen from the second map that counties in the eastern part of North Carolina have the largest percentages of African Americans.

The percentage of African American families living below the federal poverty level (\$17,603 annual income for a family of four) in 1999 was 22.9, compared to 8.4 for whites. Approximately 42 percent of African American families were headed by females, compared to 8 percent for white families. Thirty-five percent of the families headed by African American females lived in poverty, compared to 29 percent of the families headed by white females. More than 60 percent of African American adults (ages 25 and older) had a high school education or less, compared to 47 percent for whites. The unemployment rate for African Americans was 2.6 times that for whites (10.3% vs. 3.9% in 2000). Low income, low educational level, and unemployment are all associated with a higher rate of health problems.

Some of the rates in this fact sheet are age-adjusted. Age-adjustment is a statistical technique for calculating the rates or percentages for different populations as if they all had the age distribution of a "standard" population (here, the 2000 United States population). Rates adjusted to the same standard population can be directly compared to each other, with differences being attributed to factors other than age distribution.